



*Permanent Mission of*  
**Malaysia**  
*to the United Nations*

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**STATEMENT BY H.E MR. HAMIDON ALI,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
AT THE ECOSOC SPECIAL MEETING ON THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS,  
20 MAY 2008, NEW YORK**

Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me first commend you for this timely initiative. My thanks also go to the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary General and Mr. Joachim von Braun for their statements.

2. The convening of this meeting is a clear indication of the importance that the international community attaches to the problem. I hope that this concern is translated into resolve and political will and in turn, into coherent and practical policies that will address this grave challenge.

3. In the interest of time, I will not dwell on the gravity and enormity of the challenge, which are well known. Rather, I will point to issues that I believe we should focus on if this challenge is to be overcome.

4. The first is the need to accurately identify the causes of the crisis, particularly the systemic ones. To my mind, there are two broad reasons:

4.1 The first is the increased subsidies from the North and the greater privatization which have impacted agricultural smallholders, on whom food security in the developing countries have traditionally depended on. We have noted that subsidies have continued to increase despite the fact that as a trend, farmers' incomes in the developed world have increased;

4.2 The second is, owing to the faith in the comparative advantage theory, many developing countries were persuaded to devote less attention to agriculture. As a result, we have seen among others, a general reduction of the share of national budgets for agriculture, inadequate agriculture-related infrastructure such as water supply, rural road system and storage facilities.

5. Some have argued that increasing demand from the emerging economies have contributed to the increase in food prices. This is certainly true. But reasons such as these are not 'actionable' and should not be dwelt too much on. If one is to emphasise reasons such as these, the logical question to follow is, what should the action be? Surely we cannot ask those in the emerging economies to consume less food, especially when they were under-nourished in the past and in light of over-consumption in the developed world.

6. The second issue is the need to have conceptual clarity which is particularly important given the complexity of the challenge. For Malaysia, as the global food crisis is indissolubly linked with agriculture, discussions on it must be held within the overarching framework of sustainable development, based on the three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of economic development, social development and environmental protection. Therefore, the key principles of sustainable development, most particularly common but differentiated responsibility, must apply. This implies that while developing countries must exert all efforts to overcome this challenge, the developed world must shoulder the bulk of the burden, given their greater capacity to do so.

7. Conceptual clarity is also critical if we are to avoid four major pitfalls. The first pitfall is to address the issue in a piece-meal, rather than in an integrated fashion. Closely linked to this is the second pitfall, which is to link the global food crisis with issues that are only tangentially related to it. The third pitfall that we must avoid is to use the global food crisis to advance ideas for which no intergovernmental consensus exists, such as the so-called 'responsibility to protect'. The last, but by no means last pitfall is the politicization of the issue, using it to extract political and economic concessions. The lives of those threatened by this crisis are too valuable to play political football with.

Mr. President,

8. Clearly the UN has a key role to play in addressing this issue. It must use its convening power, its unique moral authority as well as the resources and expertise that its operational system possesses. We commend the establishment of the CEB Task Force last month, chaired by the Secretary General and coordinated by the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs.

9. However, the UN's involvement must not be confined only to the humanitarian aspects of the issue. Through its specialized agencies, funds and programmes the UN must do more, particularly in addressing the systemic issues causing the crisis. It must do so in a coherent and coordinated manner, making full use of, and leveraging on, the expertise that each agency possesses while at the same time respecting the mandates of each. At the same time, UN agencies must not use this crisis to raise profiles and expand bureaucracies. The lives of those affected by this crisis must not be pawns in a bureaucratic chess game.

10. Given the need to find an international consensus on how best to tackle this issue and to do it in a coherent and coordinated manner, Malaysia is supportive of efforts to convene a Special Session of the General Assembly for this purpose.

Mr. President,

11. As one of the main aims of this meeting is to share experiences on measures taken to address this crisis, allow me to conclude by outlining some of them taken by Malaysia:

- 11.1 Establishing a Cabinet Committee on Inflation, chaired by the Prime Minister to address the issue of increasing food prices;
- 11.2 Setting aside more than US\$1 billion to finance the Food Security Policy. Of this, US\$750 million has been earmarked for increased food production;
- 11.3 Buying of 500,000 tonnes of rice from Thailand to ensure sufficient stockpile;
- 11.4 Securing supplies of price-controlled 15 percent broken grains and setting price caps for two other local grades of grain;
- 11.5 Raising the guaranteed minimum price (GMP) for growers from about US\$200 to US\$250 per tonne;
- 11.6 Freeing in stages the movement of rice across state borders and floating prices for imported rice;
- 11.7 Monitoring other controlled items sold below price ceiling;
- 11.8 Expeditiously identifying unused land that can be given temporary occupation licences (TOL) for the purpose of food production; and
- 11.9 Announcing a "zero-wastage" policy of food and fuel.

Thank you.